

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO
PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRATION
OF THE FLAG OF THE
UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I attended the funeral of Congressman J.J. "Jake" Pickle—a former member of the House who represented the 10th District of Texas for 31 years. As the current representative of the 10th District of Texas, it was my duty to pay homage to Congressman Pickle who gave so much to Texas and his constituents.

In doing so, I was absent for legislative business on the floor, and missed the opportunity to vote in favor of an amendment to the Constitution to prevent the desecration of the flag. As an original cosponsor of this amendment, I would have voted "yes" to preserve the ultimate icon of American values.

Since 1994, there have been 119 instances of reported flag burning or desecration in the United States, but just one occurrence of this should be reason enough to outlaw this heinous act.

All 50 States have enacted resolutions asking Congress to pass a flag protection amendment, and an overwhelming majority of the American people have consistently supported the protection of our flag. Accordingly, the House has passed a flag protection amendment by more than the $\frac{2}{3}$ majority needed in 5 separate Congresses.

Countless men and women, including my father, who are all heroes, have served under the glory of its stars and bars and died to ensure its spirit, and desecrating our flag is a desecration of their contribution to America. The American flag serves as the world's most recognized symbol of freedom and democracy, and should be given the appropriate respect and protection.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, June 22, 2005, I was absent for votes due to important official business in my district. I missed rollcall votes Nos. 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303. Had I been present for votes, I would have voted "yea" on Nos. 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 303 and "nay" on Nos. 293, 299, 300, 301, 302.

TRIBUTE TO THE SPORTS
FOUNDATION, INC.

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to the

Sports Foundation, Inc. (SFI), a non-profit organization in the Bronx that will hold its 16th Annual "Claude Buddy Young Dinner" in acknowledgement of community leadership, on June 30th, 2005.

Using sports, education, health and the athletic arena as a model, Sports Foundation, Inc. is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of young people by developing innovative programs that foster development of the skills and qualities necessary to produce socially responsible citizens and community leaders. Since 1969, SFI has provided a full spectrum of youth development services and events to urban and at-risk youth, including sports and recreation, counseling and mentoring, educational and career development, and drug prevention and health awareness services free of charge. Through these services SFI has been able to impact over 100,000 young people.

The success that this organization has enjoyed over the past 36 years is due in large part to the great people who make up SFI. If it were not for their tireless efforts to empower the next generation of leaders, SFI would be nothing more than a great idea. I am proud to represent individuals who have the courage and conviction to take action when they see the need for improvement within the community.

Mr. Speaker, on June 30th, SFI will hold its annual dinner in which they pay tribute to individuals within the community who have complemented their efforts in the South Bronx. This year's honorees includes a wide array of influential leaders, including the late Yolanda Garcia, whose good works helped to provide adequate housing and cleaner air for Bronx residents. It is my hope that SFI and all of this year's honorees will continue to serve as a bridge between despair and hope for young people living in the South Bronx.

Mr. Speaker, as they celebrate their 16th Annual "Claude Buddy Young Dinner", I ask that my colleagues join me in paying tribute to the Sports Foundation Inc. for more than thirty-six years of service to the youth of the South Bronx.

FREEDOM FOR ALEXIS RODRÍGUEZ
FERNÁNDEZ

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Alexis Rodríguez Fernández, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Fernández is a member of both the Christian Liberation Movement and the Movement of Cuban Young People for Democracy. Mr. Rodríguez Fernández believes in bringing freedom to an island enslaved by the nightmare that is the Castro regime. Unfortunately, Mr. Rodríguez Fernández has been a constant target of the dictatorship.

According to Amnesty International, in January 2002, Mr. Rodríguez Fernández was attacked and threatened by plain clothes state security agents and later abandoned in a remote area. In March 2003, as part of Castro's heinous crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy activists, Mr. Rodríguez Fernández was

arrested. Subsequently, in a sham trial, he was sentenced to 15 years in the totalitarian gulag.

Mr. Rodríguez Fernández is currently languishing in an infernal cell in the totalitarian gulag. These depraved conditions are truly appalling. The State Department describes the conditions in the gulag as, "harsh and life threatening." The State Department also reports that police and prison officials beat, neglect, isolate, and deny medical treatment to detainees and prisoners. It is a crime of the highest order that people who work for freedom are imprisoned in these nightmarish conditions.

Let me be very clear. Mr. Rodríguez Fernández is languishing in these depraved conditions because he believes in freedom. He believes in freedom of religion and human rights for every Cuban citizen. It is intolerable that freedom fighters like Mr. Rodríguez Fernández are locked in gulags 90 miles from our shore because they believe in fundamental human rights.

Mr. Rodríguez Fernández is one of the many heroes of the peaceful Cuban democratic movement who are locked in the dungeons of the dictatorship for their beliefs. They are symbols of freedom and democracy who will always be remembered when freedom reigns again in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, it is condemnable and unconscionable that any person can be sentenced to 15 years in the grotesquely inhuman quarters of Castro's gulag for a belief in democracy. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate and unconditional release of Alexis Rodríguez Fernández and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

2005 ELLIS ISLAND MEDALS OF
HONOR AWARDS CEREMONY

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and honor the 2005 Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients. Presented annually by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO)—an umbrella group of more than 250 organizations that spans the spectrum of ethnic heritages, cultures and religions—the Ellis Island Medal of Honor commemorates and recognizes Americans of all ethnic backgrounds who have made significant contributions to our society. These medals have been aptly named for Ellis Island, as in so many ways Ellis Island is an enduring symbol of the immigrant roots and diversity that characterize our great Nation.

America has always been a haven for legal immigrants from all over the world who come to our shores with one simple dream; forging a new life in a land of opportunity, liberty, and freedom—freedom from religious, economic, political or ethnic persecution. When the immigrant station at Ellis Island, New York, opened on January 1, 1892, it admitted 700 immigrants into the United States on just its first day of operation. By the time the center closed in 1954, 17-million immigrants had passed through its doors. The Ellis Island administration and staff, on average, processed up to 5,009 people per day. Many of these